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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to learn how socialization into the teaching profession is affected by the non-academic experiences of teachers. A secondary objective was to provide insight into the research on teaching that has demonstrated that teachers pass through stages of career development. Participants were two groups of teacher education graduates: those who were traditional college-age students (under 30) and those who were classified as nontraditional or returning students (over age 30). The longitudinal study focused on: (1) whether the differences found initially between the two groups of newly certified teachers were still apparent five and six years following the completion of their preservice programs; and (2) how the career development patterns within each group were influenced by the initial differences. Participants had completed their preservice education at an urban mid-western university five and six years ago. Results indicated: (1) more nontraditional-aged teacher education graduates are teaching five and six years after certification; (2) initial differences between the groups diminished after five or six years of teaching; (3) nontraditional-aged teachers perceived a variety of factors as helpful in preparation for teaching; and (4) traditional-aged teachers are more inclined to set goals outside the classroom, such as administrative positions. (JD)

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# Career Development: A Longitudinal Study of Teachers at Different Life-stages

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The primary purpose of this study was to learn how socialization into the teaching profession is affected by the non-academic experiences of beginning teachers. A secondary objective was to provide insight into the research on teaching which has demonstrated that teachers pass through stages of career development. The objectives were met by incorporating a life-span developmental perspective with Fuller's (1969) model of teacher career development in order to interpret data from two groups of teacher education graduates: those who were traditional college-age students and those who were classified as nontraditional or returning students.

Presently, colleges and universities nationwide report that their student populations are increasingly more heterogeneous (Smith, 1982). How these demographic variations influence those students entering the profession of teaching and whether preservice and inservice programs are adequately designed to meet the professional developmental needs of differing clientele are questions raised by this research effort. This paper describes a longitudinal study of teacher career development which focused on (1) whether the differences found initially between two groups of newly certified teachers were still apparent five and six years following the completion of their preservice programs and (2) how the career development patterns within each group were influenced by the initial differences.

## Theoretical Framework

Recent attention to the question of whether the professional maturation of teachers follows an orderly sequence has focused on at least two approaches (Feiman & Floden, 1981; Floden & Feiman, 1980; Ryan, 1979). The first is concerned with inductively generating phases or patterns specific to teacher career development (Applegate & Lasley, 1979; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Gehrke, 1978, 1979; Newman, 1979; Peterson, 1979). The second approach deductively employs theories of psychological development (Harvey, Hunt, & Schroder, 1961; Kohlberg, 1968, 1977; Loevinger, 1966,

1976) as rationales for programs to facilitate professional growth (Glassberg & Sprinthall, 1980; Oja, 1980; Oja & Sprinthall, 1978; Bernier & Sprinthall, 1978; Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983; Theis-Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1987). Not only has the interaction between these two approaches been minimal, but neither approach has generated hypotheses about the patterns of maturation during teaching from the patterns of development gleaned from adult development theorists. Recently, several reviewers (Burke, 1985; Christensen, 1985; Fessler, 1985) have noted the import of identifying the professional growth needs of teachers. The present study is conceptualized to contribute to that knowledge base.

The goal of this research is to contribute to an understanding of the processes involved in the socialization of teachers. It is hypothesized that these processes are influenced by the academic and nonacademic experiences and by the "developmental readiness" of preparing teachers. The long range objective was to follow two groups of preparing teachers through their first five years of teaching. This study is a report of the follow-up phase of the project. Specifically, differences in teachers' orientations to the profession, their career goals, and aspirations were examined as a function of their ages. Comparisons were made between teachers who at certification fit into the college student-aged population and teachers who at certification were classified as returning students or adult learners.

Assuming that there are stages of teaching, how is passage through the stages affected by the life stage or age of the beginning teacher? Life-span developmental theories provide some direction for responding to this question. Levinson (1978), for example, interviewed forty men eight to ten times during a four year period and proposed three stages of adult life with transitional periods between each. College-aged students fall into a "novice phase" (ages 17-22) in their transition to adulthood while older students are firmly in early adulthood (ages 18-40/45) or middle

adulthood (ages 40/45-65). Based on a survey of more than 500 persons, Gould (1972, 1978) found that adulthood is characterized by a series of "life concerns" specific to phases of early, middle, and late adulthood. The work of others supports these findings (Neugarten, 1968; Sheehy, 1976).

Researchers of adult development generally are in agreement that there are specific stages of adulthood and that there are certain concerns, crises, or obsessions common to each. The concerns of the young adult focus on preparation for achieving competence and independence in the realms of family, finance, and job security. Observers of beginning teachers note that this is a time of stress and conflict given all of the adjustments to new demands that must be made, (Andrews, 1987; Gehrke, 1979; Ryan et al., 1980). However, the beginning years of teaching may provoke different anxieties and require different adjustments for returning students who have previously attained competence in these areas. One aim of this study is to consider these developmental views of adulthood vis à vis Fuller's (1969, 1975) conceptualization of teacher concerns. The results of the initial study (Cohen, 1982, 1983) found differences between young and returning student teachers in terms of their career choices, their goals, and several factors derived from Fuller's model.

Fuller postulates that there are three stages of learning to teach. In the first beginning teachers are preoccupied with their own adequacies in the classroom. They want to be accepted by their pupils and colleagues and to be evaluated favorably by their superiors. The second stage is characterized by concerns about the pressures and tasks of teaching such as class size, noninstructional duties, and institutional rigidity. Third stage concerns focus on the scholastic and affective impact that teachers can have on pupils. Data from Fuller and others (Adams, Hutchinson, & Martray, 1980; Adams & Martray, 1981; Cooperstein, 1981) demonstrate in support of the model that the concerns of preservice and beginning teachers differ from those of inservice teachers. The supporting data, however, is usually cross-sectional and the pattern of progression

through the three stages often reveals that even inexperienced teachers are more concerned about pupil impact variables (stage 3) than they are about classroom tasks (stage 2).

## Procedures

### Participants

Participants in the study had completed their preservice education programs at an urban mid-western university five and six years ago. At that time, the study was designed to examine differences between students completing the program during their traditional college years (before age 30) and those who pursued certification after the age of 30. Participants in each group were matched on the basis of age, marital status, sex, and declared major teaching discipline. Of the 73 participants for whom complete data were available in the original study, current addresses were located and invitations to participate in the follow-up study were sent to 69 persons. Of those who agreed to participate, 58 (84%) completed instruments providing complete data for the present study, reducing the traditional group to 25 females and 3 males and the nontraditional group to 28 females and 5 males. The mean age of the traditional group at follow-up was 28.5; the mean age of the nontraditional group, 42.

### Data Collection

Contact with participants for the follow-up was made through the mail and by telephone. Parents and guardians were contacted for current addresses when necessary. An initial letter outlined the project's goals and requested voluntary consent. A second mailing included instructions for completing two instruments and stamped, return envelopes. Participants completed the Teacher Concerns Checklist--Form B developed by Fuller and her colleagues (George, 1974, 1978; George, Borich, & Fuller, 1974). This 56-item Likert-type questionnaire assesses the degree to which respondents are concerned about issues related to teaching. Examples are "whether the students really like me or not" and "clarifying the limits of my authority and responsibility."

Respondents rate each item on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). Those not currently teaching were instructed to complete the checklist "as if you were going into the classroom tomorrow." The second instrument was a Career Development Survey designed to obtain information about respondents' professional choices, experiences, satisfactions and expectations, significant life experiences influencing their careers since certification, post certification credits earned, and their future career aspirations. Specific questions were included to learn which factors influenced those who chose not to enter the teaching profession.

Data Analysis

Scales from the Teacher Concerns Checklist were constructed to use as dependent variables using the three factors hypothesized by Fuller (1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) and identified by George (1974, 1978) as self, task, and impact concerns. These scales are composed of items listed in Table 1. Scales were also constructed according to six factors identified by Adams, et al. (1980, 1981): self concerns about (1) adult perceptions and (2) pupil perceptions, task concerns related (3) to instruction and to (4) discipline, and impact concerns related to (5) academics and (6) the school environment. Table 2 lists the items included in each of these scales. For each scale responses to the items were averaged to arrive at a factor value which ranged from 1 to 5. Data from the Career Development Survey were analyzed by compiling responses pertaining to common themes and concepts, such as reasons for leaving or remaining in the field, future career goals, and sources of satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the profession. Some information was more readily objectively coded (marital status, graduate credit hours completed, hours spent in extracurricular or volunteer activities). The data from the survey serve to amplify and clarify the results from the analysis of the Teacher Concerns Checklist.

## Results

The results are organized to answer the following questions:

1. Are nontraditional graduates more likely than traditional graduates to remain in the classroom?
2. How do the concerns of the nontraditional and traditional graduates who remain in the classroom change during the first five or six years of teaching?
3. Are there differences in how the two groups of teachers perceive and reflect upon their personal and professional experiences during their initial years in the classroom?

Many more questions can be asked about this data set, but this paper is limited to analyses which provide information about those participants still teaching. The important and intriguing comparisons to those who no longer teach will be addressed in the future.

### Question 1

This question focuses on an issue most basic to the study. Table 3 presents a breakdown by group (traditional or nontraditional) of the present teaching status of participants. Significantly more of the nontraditional graduates (85%) were currently teaching at the elementary or secondary level; only 46% of the traditional group remained in classroom positions when follow-up data was collected [$\chi^2$ (1, $N$ = 58) = 12.85, $p$ <.001].

### Question 2

The longitudinal question of whether and how the concerns of the practicing teachers changed over time was answered by analyzing the data from the Teacher Concerns Checklist. Since three assessments (pre- and post-student teaching, follow-up) were available on both groups of teachers, the decision to use repeated measures analysis of variance was made following Nunnally's (1975a, 1975b) recommendations. The GLM

procedure of the SAS (1985) statistical package was used in these analyses. Although comparable data were obtained from participants who were no longer teaching in order to ascertain what their concerns would be should they choose to return to the classroom in the future, no conceptual hypotheses were generated to justify including that data in the comparative analyses. Consequently, the between groups factor in these analyses compared the 13 traditionally-aged graduates presently teaching to the 27 nontraditionally-aged graduates presently teaching with repeated measures on the teacher concerns data. A separate analysis was run for each scale derived from the factors identified in the research of both George (1978) and Adams, et al. (1980). The repeated measures analyses yield a between groups main effect comparing traditional to nontraditional teachers, a within groups main effect for experience at three different points in time, and an interaction effect.

Figures 1 through 9 graphically illustrate the longitudinal patterns in each teacher concerns scale for the two groups of teachers. The three points in time noted on the abscissa are spaced to reflect the distance between the student teaching experience and the present follow-up study. Tables 4 and 5 include the means for each scale for both groups of teachers.

The means on the three original George (1978) factors (self, task, impact concerns) are graphed in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Examination of the means shows a decrease over time for all teachers on self concerns as Fuller would predict, but little change on task and impact concerns. At each point in time all teachers were most concerned about their impact on students and moderately concerned about classroom tasks. The repeated measures analyses revealed effects only for self concerns. A significant main effect was found over time [ $\underline{F}$ (2, 76) = 17.45, $\underline{p}$ <.0001] indicating that with classroom experience all teachers' self concerns decrease. The between groups main effect approached significance [ $\underline{F}$ (1, 38 = 3.89, $\underline{p}$ <.055] indicating that life-stage or age also may contribute systematically to a decrease in self concerns.

Figures 4 through 9 visually show the longitudinal patterns of the means on the six scales derived from the Adams' et al. research (1980). Again, the analysis were most revealing for self concerns, both those about pupils' perceptions (figure 4) and those about adults' perceptions (figure 5), and elucidate the results of the analysis with the George self concerns scale. At each point in time all teachers were more concerned about how others (supervisors, peers) in the profession perceived them than they were with how students perceived them. Mean scale scores were consistently higher for the traditional teachers. The analysis of variance on self concerns about pupils resulted in significant main effects between groups [ $F$ (1, 38) = 9.10, $p$ <.005] and over time [ $F$ (2, 76) = 17.88 $p$ <.001], and a significant interaction effect between the two factors ( $F$ (2, 76) = 5.17, $p$ <.008]. Post hoc comparisons showed significant differences between the two groups before and after student teaching, but not at follow-up. These effects show that the traditional teachers were significantly more concerned than the nontraditional teachers about how pupils perceive them early in their career development and that, with experience in the classroom, their concerns diminish. After five or six years in the classroom, the two groups have similar, low concerns about pupil perceptions. The analysis of variance on self concerns about adult perceptions resulted in a between groups main effect that approached significance [ $F$ (1, 38) = 3.15, $p$ <.08] and a within groups main effect for time [ $F$ (2, 76) = 7.98 $p$ <.0007]. There was no interaction effect. These results indicate that both age and experience systematically contribute to a decrease in concerns related to adult or peer evaluation.

The analyses on task concerns related to instruction and task concerns related to discipline resulted in no significant effects. A comparison of figures 6 and 7 shows that both groups of teachers had higher mean concerns about discipline than they did on instruction, echoing current national trends. Over time these mean ratings consistently remain of moderate concern. These patterns were also characteristic of Adams' (1982) data.

The means for impact concerns related to academics are the highest rated scales for both groups of teachers at all three points in time. These concerns did not change over time for either group of teachers (see figure 8), a pattern found also with Adams' (1982) data. Impact concerns related to environmental influences receive lower mean ratings by both groups of teachers (figure 9). Items on the scale derived from Adams' factor analysis were not contained in any of the George scales and showed no variation in Adams' study. The analysis of variance for this scale resulted in a significant main effect for time [ $F$ (2, 76) = 4.30, $p$ <.02], indicating that both groups of teachers became less concerned about environmental issues as they became more experienced in the classroom. Ratings of this scale were higher before and after student teaching, perhaps reflecting the initial concerns of student teachers about school problems noted frequently in the media (drugs, drop-outs, climate).

Summary. These findings (1) support Fuller's developmental model for the scales related to self concerns, (2) provide support for the scales related to self concerns and environmental impact concerns derived from the Adams et al. (1980) factor analysis, (3) and raise questions concerning Fuller's hypotheses of developmental changes regarding task and impact concerns. The data reported here is generally consistent with other studies (Adams, 1982; Cooperstein, 1981) looking at changes over time on the three George scales, but this data set provides more compelling results because it is based on longitudinal, rather than cross-sectional data.

The inclusion of individual differences among teachers as a between groups factor provided an avenue to examine whether the developmental model was supported for teachers at different life-stages or ages. This is difficult to judge for task and impact concerns for which all teachers' concerns were consistent and stable over time. Self concerns, however, were originally hypothesized and found to be higher for traditional, compared to nontraditional, student teachers. Over the first five or six years of teaching, as the traditional teachers mature and gain experiences (in life and

the classroom), their concerns about how pupils perceive them are no longer significantly different from the nontraditional teachers. A similar, but not as robust, pattern holds for the self concerns about adult perceptions scale. It may be that the greatest differences on this scale will be seen once tenure has been achieved and evaluation is no longer an extremely salient concern to these teachers. Similarly, changes on the task and impact concerns scales may not be developmentally predicted to occur until much later in the career maturation of these teachers.

Question 3

Responses to the Career Development Survey were used to ascertain whether there were differences in how the two groups of teachers perceived or reflected upon their initial years in the classroom. Of interest to this report are responses to questions about preparation for teaching, significant factors influencing career development, and future career goals.

The traditional-aged teachers generally offered one explanation in answer to the question, what best prepared you for teaching? Eight of the eleven teachers pointed to student teaching or the first year of teaching as the major preparatory source; one cited growing up with younger siblings, and two gave no response to the question. In contrast, the nontraditional teachers' offered more than one response and there was more diversity in their explanations. Less than half (10) felt that student teaching was the best source of their preparation; five identified parenting; nine pointed to past experiences such as having been substitute teachers, teacher's aides, scout leaders, and three attributed their best source of preparation to their own personalities e.g. their "love of the young". Yet, this group of teachers offered multiple responses to this question. They also identified mentors, previous work and leadership experiences and specific university courses.

On the survey respondents rated the importance of a number of professional experiences to their career development. These ratings were analyzed objectively. No

statistically significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of their perceptions of the import of supervision, mentors, professional workshops, in-service training, post-certification course work, or informal contacts with colleagues. Responses to open-ended questions about significant life experiences were also examined. The themes that emerged from compiling these responses for both groups included salary, illness, marriage, divorce, and death. Moving from one city to another was cited as a positive experience by teachers in each group. The nontraditional teachers noted more frequently that their spouses and children were very supportive of their careers; for the most part their children were older and they had been married longer than the traditional teachers. Several younger teachers noted that they expected having children would influence their careers.

Finally, participants responded to a question to identify their future career goals. In each group there was one teacher who planned to leave the field of education. Of the remaining twenty-five in the nontraditional group who responded to the question, all planned to maintain classroom teaching positions. Four mentioned the possibility of eventually seeking school administrative positions. Of the remaining eleven in the traditional group who responded to the question, two questioned whether they would remain in education. The others projected they would continue in education with five expecting to seek certification and obtain positions as administrators, counselors, or psychological examiners.

## Discussion

The results reported so far demonstrate that (1) significantly more nontraditional-aged teacher education graduates are teaching five to six years after certification; (2) that initial differences between traditional and nontraditional graduates' self concerns about pupils and about adults diminish after five to six years of teaching: (3) that nontraditional-aged teachers perceived a variety of factors as

helpful in their preparation for teaching; and (4) that traditional-aged teachers are more inclined to set goals to move outside of the classroom into administrative positions. The differences between these two groups which showed as early as teacher training have had an impact on these teachers during the induction years.

Since the student teaching semester the older group of teachers has evidenced more commitment to classroom teaching. They completed their first five or six years of teaching and see themselves remaining in the classroom. Few have aspirations to enter the administrative hierarchy. In contrast, only 46% of the younger graduates remained in teaching at follow-up. Of that group less than twenty-five percent see classroom teaching as a future career goal. During the induction years the younger groups' self-concerns eased and they became less preoccupied with how others' perceived them. This career maturity may be due to both personal and professional maturation.

Many questions remain unanswered in this data set and provide the impetus for future inquiry. Looking at generational issues longitudinally has been fruitful for a variety of reasons. Foremost, it has been important to reject the assumption that teacher education graduates are a homogeneous population. This is an increasingly diverse group of individuals who bring to teacher education and to teaching a variety of personal and professional experiences. Although these experiences eventually merge and the two groups look more alike than different after the beginning years of teaching, not all of those now teaching will continue to do so. In fact, it is likely that the 54% of the traditional group who were not using their certificates at follow-up may choose to do so in the future. Their re-entry into the profession may pose a different challenge for inservice development. A close look at those not teaching will answer a different set of questions than did this examination of those remaining in the classroom. Individual differences affect practitioners throughout career development. Such differences can be understood and accommodated to facilitate professional growth. By taking a life-span developmental approach to teacher career development, both the theory and practice of teacher education are challenged.

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Table 1

Items in the Concerns Factors Identified by George (1978)

Self Concerns

Doing well when a supervisor is present
Feeling more adequate as a teacher
Being accepted and respected by professional persons
Getting a favorable evaluation of my teaching
Maintaining the appropriate degree of class control

Task Concerns

Lack of instructional materials
Feeling under pressure too much of the time
Working with too many students each day
Too many noninstructional duties
The routine and inflexibility of the situation

Impact Concerns

Meeting the needs of different kinds of students
Diagnosing student learning problems
Challenging unmotivated students
Guiding students toward intellectual and emotional growth
Whether each student is getting what he (or she) needs

Table 2

Items in the Concerns Factors Identified by Adams et al. (1980, 1981)

Self Concerns

About Pupil Perceptions

Whether the students really like me or not
Acceptance as a friend by students
How students feel about me

About Adult Perceptions

Doing well when a supervisor is present
Getting a favorable evaluation of my teaching
Being accepted and respected by professional persons

Task Concerns

As Related to Instruction

Feeling under pressure too much of the time
The routine and inflexibility of the situation
Becoming too personally involved with students
Working with too many students each day
Lack of academic freedom

As Related to Classroom Discipline

Lack of respect of some students
Maintaining the appropriate degree of class control
The values and attitudes of the current generation
Students who disrupt class

Impact Concerns

As Related to Academics

Meeting the needs of different kinds of students
Diagnosing student learning problems
Challenging unmotivated students
Guiding students toward intellectual and emotional growth
Whether each student is getting what he (or she) needs

As Related to School Environmental Influences

Student health and nutrition problems that affect learning
The psychological climate of the school
Chronic absence and dropping out of students
Student use of drugs

Table 3

Teaching Status of Participants at Follow-up

| Group | Presently Teaching | Not Teaching |
|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 13 | 15 |
| Nontraditional | 27 | 3 |

Table 4

Mean Level of Concerns (after George) of Teachers

| | Traditional ( n = 13 ) | | | Nontraditional ( n = 27 ) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Concern | Pre | Post | Follow-up | Pre | Post | Follow-up |
| Self | 4.03 | 4.02 | 3.32 | 3.80 | 3.38 | 2.96 |
| Task | 3.14 | 3.29 | 3.26 | 2.94 | 2.96 | 3.01 |
| Impact | 4.08 | 4.06 | 4.12 | 4.04 | 4.29 | 3.90 |

Table 5

Mean Level of Concerns (after Adams et al.) of Teachers

| | Traditional ( n - 13 ) | | | Nontraditional ( n = 27 ) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Concern | Pre | Post | Follow-up | Pre | Post | Follow-up |
| Self | | | | | | |
| Pupil | 3.44 | 2.97 | 2.15 | 2.41 | 2.28 | 2.02 |
| Adult | 4.08 | 3.92 | 3.56 | 3.84 | 3.44 | 3.10 |
| Task | | | | | | |
| Instructional | 2.98 | 3.12 | 2.88 | 2.79 | 2.80 | 2.65 |
| Discipline | 3.77 | 3.75 | 3.42 | 3.46 | 3.53 | 3.52 |
| Impact | | | | | | |
| Academic | 4.08 | 4.06 | 4.12 | 4.04 | 4.29 | 3.90 |
| Environmental | 3.58 | 3.63 | 3.21 | 3.32 | 3.48 | 3.00 |

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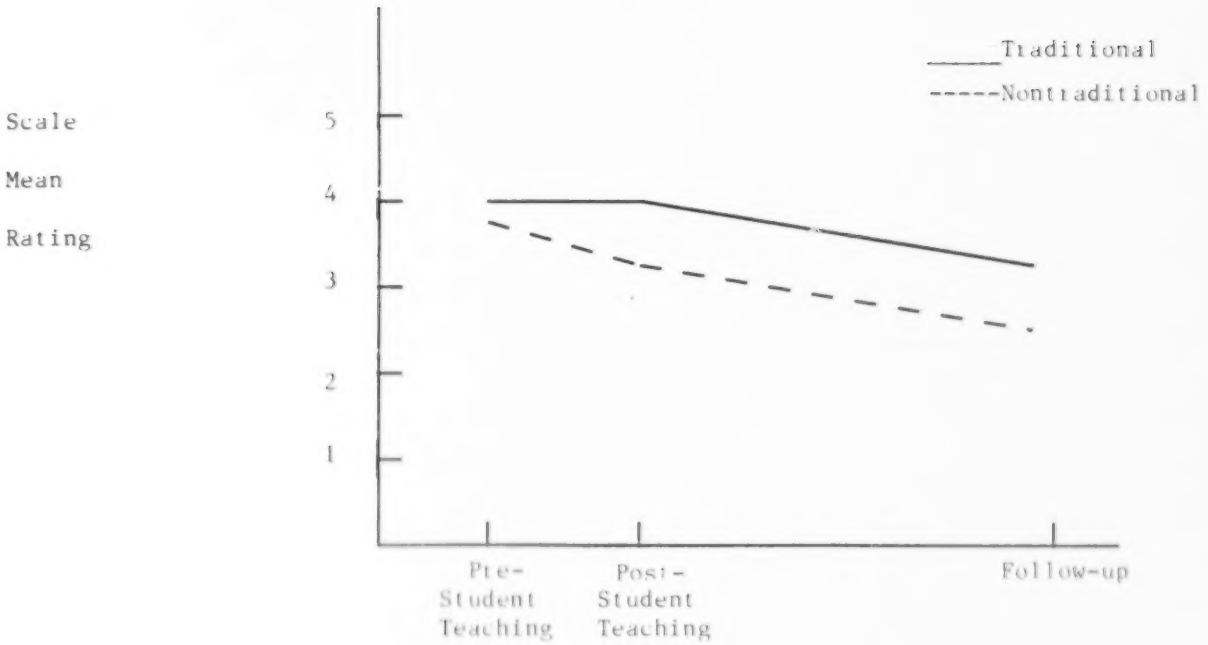


Figure 1. Mean rating of self concepts as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

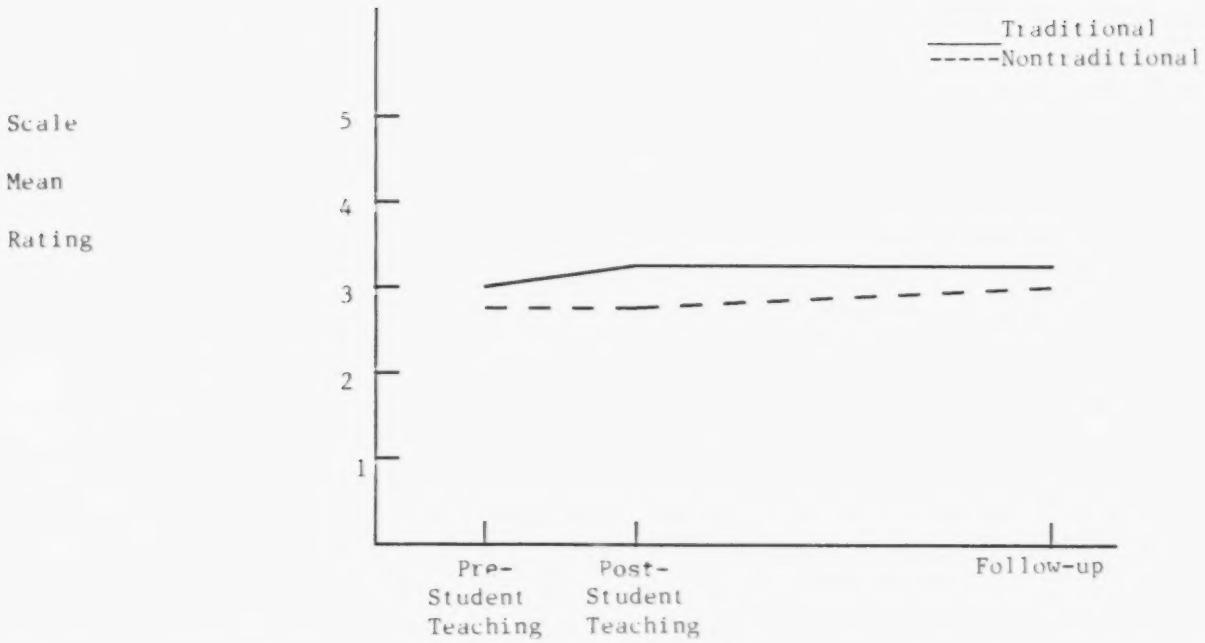


Figure 2. Mean rating of task concerns as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

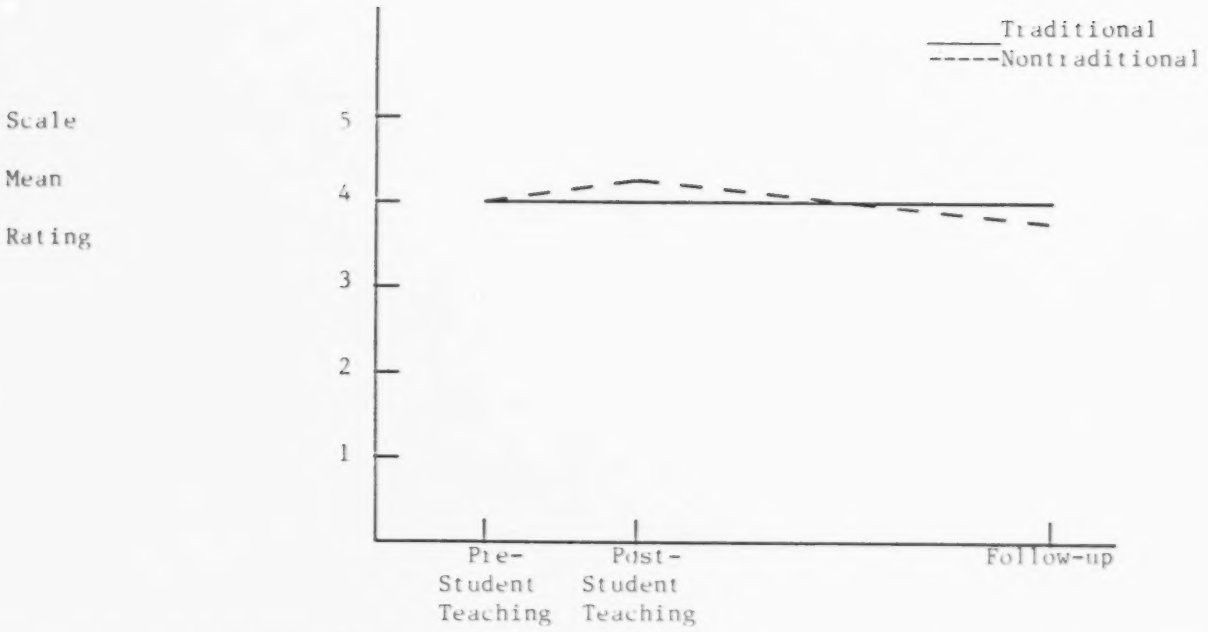


Figure 3. Mean rating of impact concerns as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

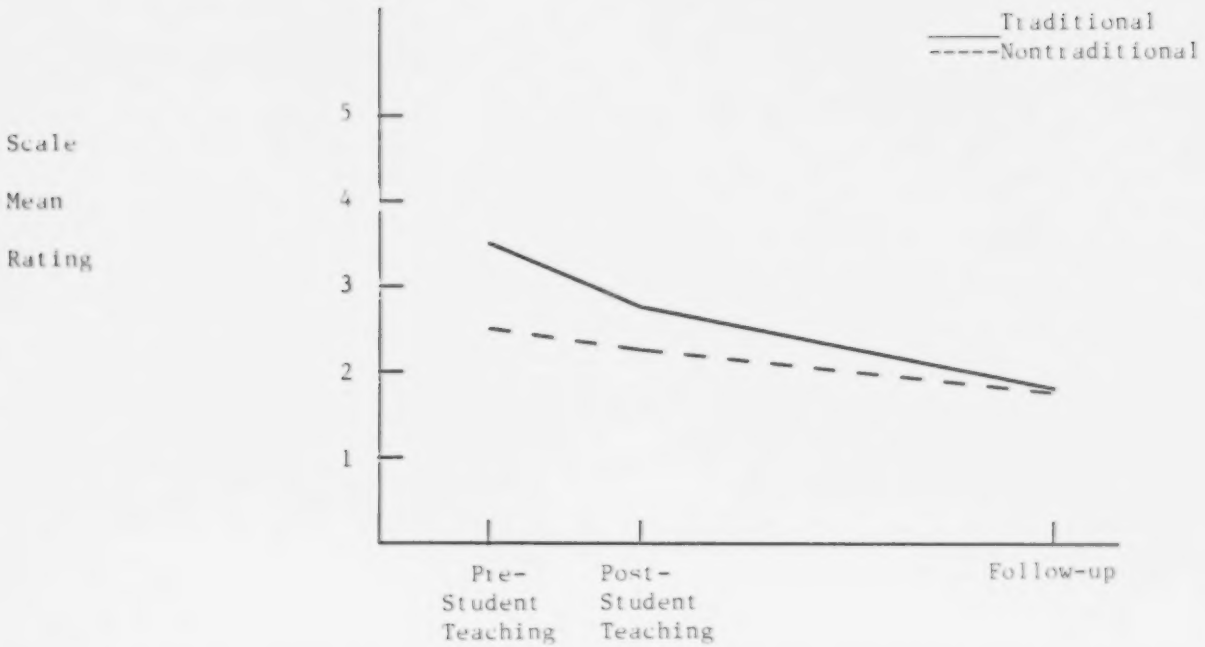


Figure 4. Mean rating of self concetns about pupils as a function of expetience fot two groups of teachers.

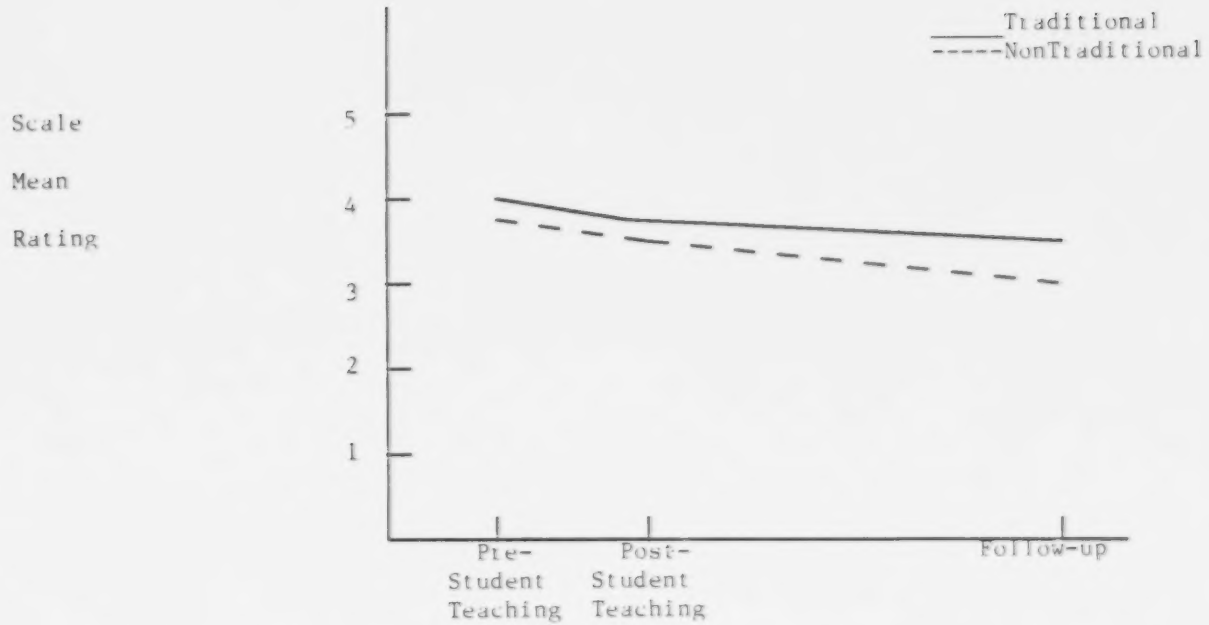


Figure 5. Mean rating of self concerns about adults as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

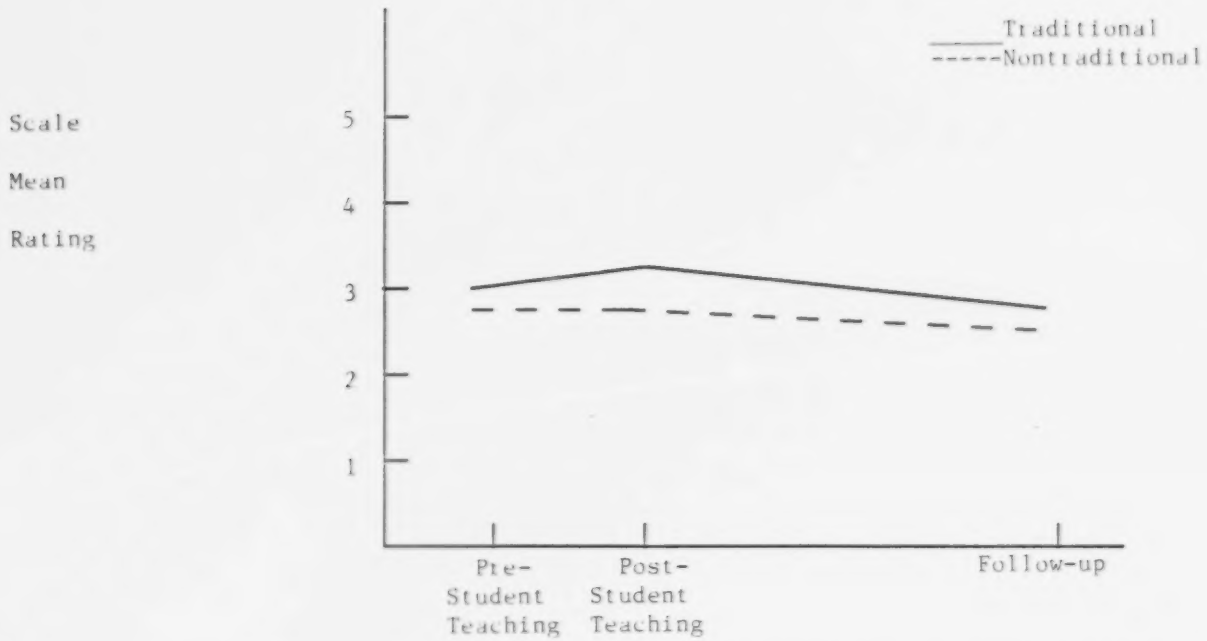


Figure 6. Mean rating of task concerns about instruction as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

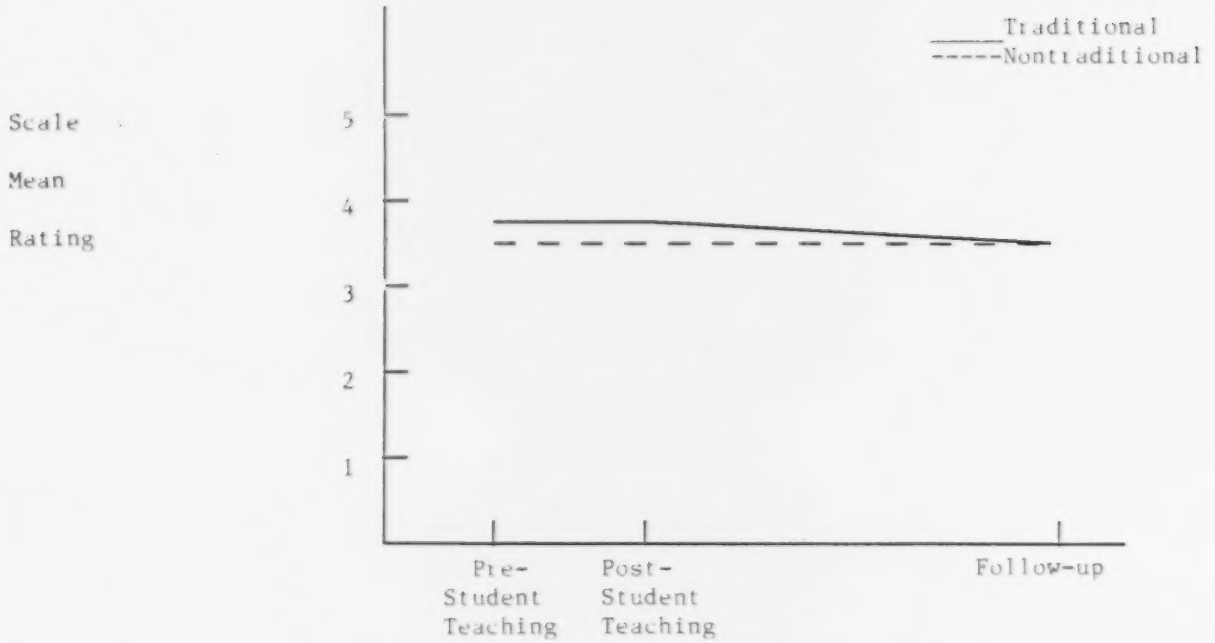


Figure 7. Mean rating of task concerns about discipline as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

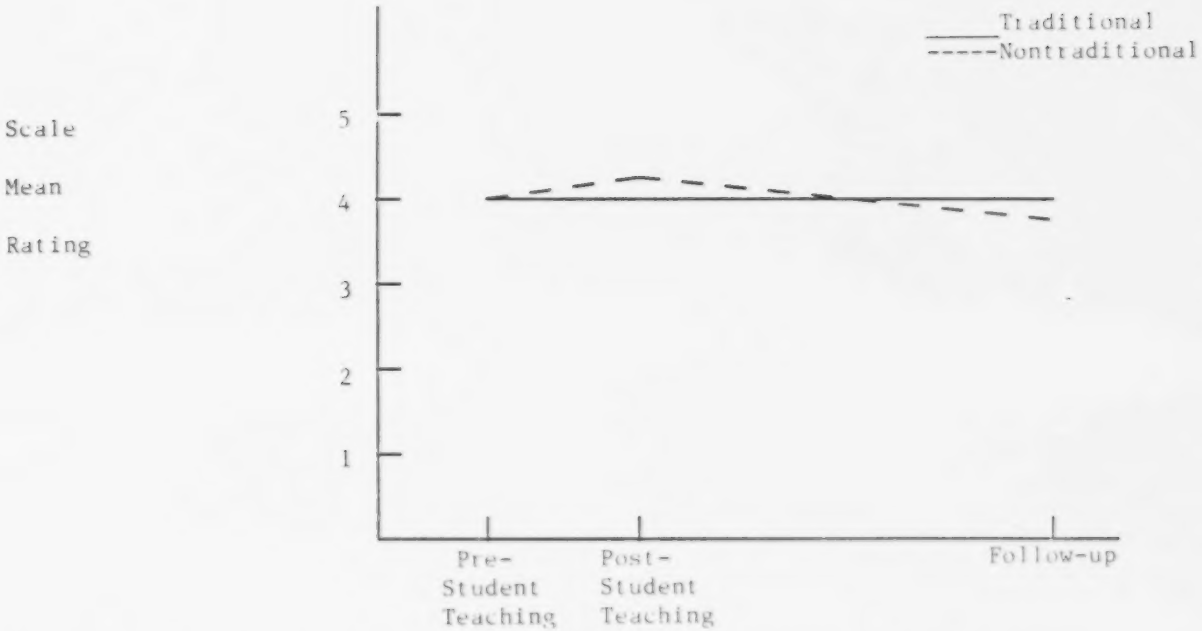


Figure 8. Mean rating of impact concerns about academics as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.

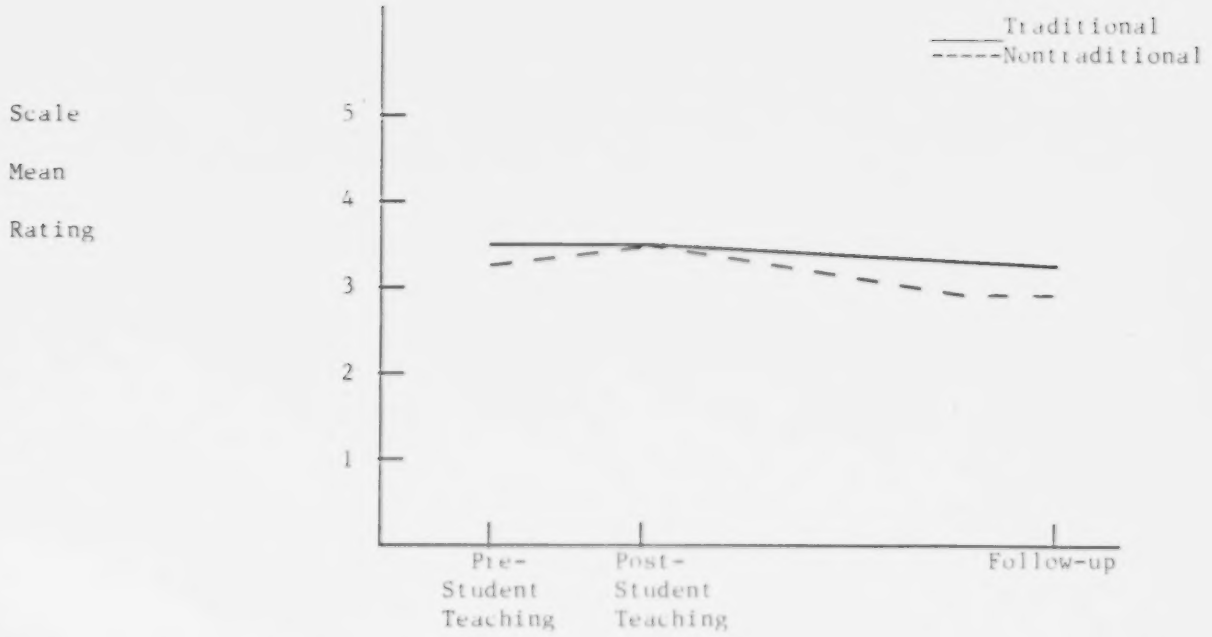


Figure 9. Mean rating of impact concerns about the environment as a function of experience for two groups of teachers.